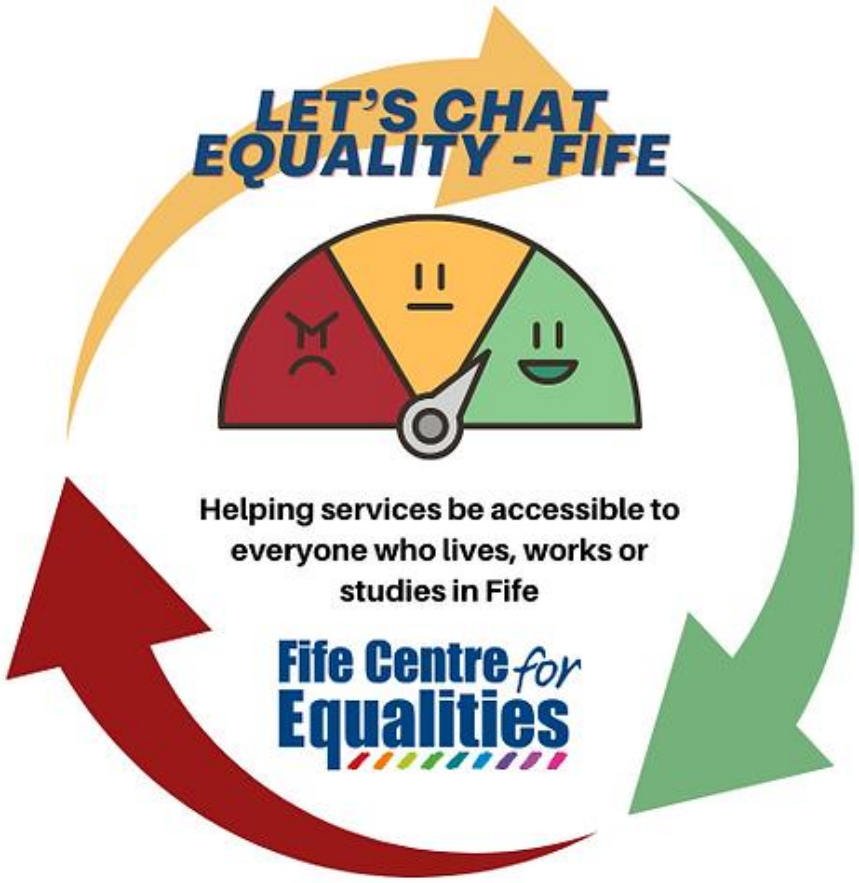
FCE Qualitative Research & Community Feedback Snapshot

Case Studies from FCE's 'Lets Chat' – conversations about equality, fairness, the local Equality Outcomes and 'what really matters' for diverse residents in Fife.



Snapshot: 2 October 2024 – 21 March 2025

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FCE Case Studies

Let's Chat Case Study – 1

Protected Characteristics: Age, Race, Disability and early(er) intervention.

Client's situation: Mrs K is of Asian origin with a history of multiple health and some mobility concerns for a long time that restrict her movement and everyday activities. Mrs K's physical ability is unlikely to get better, and her care is managed at home with the aid of adaptations approved and installed by the Occupational Therapy Team at Fife Council. Mrs K relies on family support for personal care, for going out and about and currently lives with family in a private accommodation. She has some English language skills but needs support for her appointments due to the nature of her health issues and for interpreting the information shared with herself.
Mrs K had previously been referred to Fife Council's social work team via FCE as she needed support equipment around the house to manage her daily tasks with ease and as independently as possible. After assessments by firstly the social work team, and then an occupational therapist, she was provided with the equipment required and had some additional adaptations installed in her home. Her referral was then closed by the OT department as she had been provided with all the support that she required at that stage.

Challenges encountered when accessing services: Following a house move, Mrs K moved the portable equipment with herself but had to contact the social work team again for the adaptations that needed to be installed in the new property. As the previous referral had been closed, Mrs K had to request a new referral. Following the referral, she was put on a waiting list again for an assessment, firstly by social work and then by occupational therapy team. This resulted in significant delay in getting the required equipment installed. The mobility strain negatively impacted Mrs K's outstanding health concerns and resulted in hospitalisation. Following discharge from the hospital, Mrs K was referred to social work again by the nursing team assisting with her aftercare. She eventually had an over-the-phone assessment, followed by an in-person visit and was referred for adaptations to be installed in the new property 3 months after the initial referral. The joiner team at Fife Council were very prompt and delivered and installed the required aids very soon after the referral was made by OT.

Outcome from seeking support / FCE contribution: As Mrs K had previously spoken to FCE and was able to access support through FCE's referral, this time she had a better understanding of navigating the support system and was better aware of what services she needs to involve. FCE staff had guided her and shared contact details for the Fife Council Social Work helpline throughout her initial referral. Therefore, Mrs K was able to initiate her referral independently in this instance and felt confident in being able to speak to both the social work and OT team herself.

Learning and Findings / Client suggestions for improving service access: In Mrs K's case, an earlier intervention or escalated referral could have prevented further crisis resulting in hospitalisation. Although there was other health concerns involved along with mobility issues, however, the mobility issues become a bigger challenge. They can trigger and negatively impact existing health conditions associated with age in the absence of appropriate aids that can otherwise help an individual carry out activities more safely and independently. It is FCE's recommendation that in such cases, where an individual's mobility issues are unlikely to improve and expected to deteriorate over time, their referral is not completely discharge. It should rather be kept dormant, so when and if the individual's circumstances change, the referral can be re-activated, and appropriate support can be provided. Further recommendation would be an annual assessment/needs review by Occupational Therapy department for cases like Mrs K. Recognising and recording these cases as likely to deteriorate, so a timely intermediation can reduce pressure on other support services such as NHS or Health and Social Care. This will also result in improving relations between Fife Council services and the residents of Fife as it provides reassurances that the council is there to support them and also enables individuals to live independently with a better quality of life.

Let's Chat Case Study – 2

Protected Characteristics: Age (Parents/CYP/families; Older People), Disability, local transport

Clients' situation / experiences / barriers: This case study focuses on a group of community members. The feedback shared has been recorded as part of Let's Chat improvements. The clients are all residents of Dunfermline and surrounding areas, and include Fife College students, parents & pupils in Woodmill and St Columba's high schools, and residents near the Dunfermline Learning Campus.

Challenges encountered when accessing services: Traffic has become a significant issue around Dunfermline Learning Campus since late 2024. Currently there are only 2 entrances leading to the campus and housing scheme past the campus, resulting in significant tailbacks during the morning and afternoon school runs. This is experienced by all road users including people trying to get to work, college or school. Moreover, this puts the residents in the surrounding schemes as well as the learning campus users at additional risk if the emergency vehicles are unable to reach them in case of emergency. Particular concern was raised about the response time of ambulances for older disabled people in the area who have health conditions.

Outcome from seeking support / FCE contribution: FCE has previously run transport consultations and community member wanting to get further involved in planning.

Learning and Findings / Client suggestions for improving service access: The joint feedback from the group is that the local residents should have been consulted more by Fife Council when planning the learning campus's access infrastructure. There are several new properties that have been built in the past few years in Dunfermline, but it seems as if the road and access planning has not kept up with the new developments. Expansion and use of the learning campus in its current location was naturally expected to bring additional flow of traffic for the service users of the new facilities as well as residents moving closer to the school.

The new campus has significantly reduced the traffic pressure from Woodmill's previous site, i.e. Shields Road, but unproportionately increased the same pressure on another site. Clients' suggestions for managing the flow are to increase access for vehicular traffic to and from the campus's site. Where there is currently only 2 roads at the moment, if increased, it'll distribute the current concentration and improve access for the local residents and emergency services.

Let's Chat Case Study – 3

Protected Characteristics: Race, Refugee/New Scots and multiple barriers.

Client's situation / experiences / barriers:
The client is a married individual from Ukraine who had to migrate to Scotland with her young child due to the on-going Russia-Ukraine war, while her partner stayed in Ukraine. She moved to Fife under the temporary visas scheme and was initially accommodated in a hotel, then moved in with a family under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, before eventually moving to a private rented property. She faced significant language barriers, resulting in a lack of understanding about the available support.

Challenges encountered when accessing services:
As the client had moved as a lone parent with a young child, without any English language skills, she faced several challenges upon her arrival in Fife along with the mental stress of fleeing war while her immediate family members were still in Ukraine.

Language:
When the client arrived in the UK with her daughter, she didn't have the English language skills to understand and process the information that was being given. She arranged little group activities on her own to support people in the temporary accommodation who were in the same situation as herself and engaged with speakers of English language. She also started taking private tuition and is still doing so to improve her language skills. Before she could improve her English language skills, she could not access information re: support available for herself or her daughter.
As a result, finding employment, getting out and about, school/education etc all proved to be very challenging.

Public Transport: The client found that public transport in Fife is not practical for some cases. She resided in Cowdenbeath and found the public transport to other Fife localities such as Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline that had better job aspects were too expensive and time consuming especially in a situation as herself, where she is a lone parent, in employment, juggling school and childcare by herself.

Childcare: Childcare has been very expensive and hard to secure. In most cases, it is unaffordable and there are very limited options. While unemployed and looking for work, she had to pay full cost of afterschool club to secure a place for her child. This proved very tricky and most of her universal credit went towards funding this. She could only access discounted price (80% discount) when she started work.

Employment: Due to the language skills, the client had trouble applying for jobs. Now however, it is likely going to be difficult to acquire jobs due to the limited duration remaining on her visa despite the 18-month extension.

Digital Skills: Most of the support is available online, making it inaccessible to those who lack digital and language skills. The client herself can access internet and look for the support she needs for herself, is able to offer support to a few other Ukrainian refugees who ask her for help, however, those who do not have someone to support them with internet access are at a risk of being neglected.

Housing: There was a lot of uncertainty around housing for almost all the Ukrainian refugees, especially when the initial Homes for Ukraine scheme was coming to an end. There's a lack of housing support from Fife Council and private landlords are reluctant on renting their property to someone who is a refugee and on benefits. The client was only able to secure private accommodation as her current landlord previously had Ukrainian refugee as tenants who referred the client to the landlord, at the end of their tenancy.

The general uncertainty around visa extension situation for Ukrainian refugees is causing stress to a lot of individuals as this could mean job losses, resulting in homelessness and financial crisis. There isn't a lot of information available at the moment and what is available is not accessible to all the refugees either. Application for the extension can only be made 28 days before the current visa expires, meaning that when applying for a study or work, their status shows the upcoming original visa expiry date, which can lead to loss of study/employment opportunities.

Outcome from seeking support / FCE contribution: *This interview was conducted as part of Let's Chat Equality, so in this instance the client didn't ask FCE for support, but wanted to shareher experience with us, so we could record and share with Fife Council. The client remain in touch with FCE team engagement event.

Learning and Findings / Client suggestions for improving service access: Consideration to those who have migrated to Fife, have rebuilt their lives after fleeing the war, and are contributing to their communities, when making decisions regarding their future. Short-term support for refugees from Ukraine has been very helpful from Fife Council and has enabled them to take control of their lives again after facing displacement. For some individuals, mostly those aged 65+, this support was understood to be temporary, however, those who are young/working age and have started their studies or professional careers from scratch in the past 4 years, it is a worrying issue not knowing if they'll be able to continue with their studies/careers in the UK, and how to sustain it.

Let's Chat Case Study – 4

Protected Characteristics: Age, Race and limited support with language barriers.

Client's situation / experiences / barriers: Client is an unpaid 'sandwich carer', who provides caring support both to her widowed parent and her grandchildren. She is of Asian origin. Providing support to multiple generations is not uncommon in many communities. It reduces the overall financial burden, but in turn can also take a negative toll on the carer's mental and physical health. Her experience with Fife Council's support staff has overall been excellent, the only issue she's had is not knowing what support is available.

Challenges encountered when accessing services: The client has limited English language skills, which becomes a barrier when looking for support or additional services that an individual might be entitled to. Moreover, the client has raised concerns that her property (Fife Council rented) is needing some repairs that have been pending for a long time. They have contacted

Outcome from seeking support / FCE contribution: The client was struggling financially and asked FCE if there was any benefit support that herself or her parent would be entitled to. A few of FCE staff had received Entitled-To Benefit Checker training and were able to guide clients in these situations. As FCE staff cannot discuss clients' personal financial details, staff were only able to share the benefit checker tool with clients so they could carry out the checks themselves and then request support based on their individual results. In this case, FCE staff searched and interpreted the online available support and asked the client to visit her local Fife Council office in-person if possible. The client was eligible for a few support options, including reduction on her council tax bill, which the Fife Council office staff helped her apply for.

Learning and Findings / Client suggestions for improving service access: In the client's situation where they're providing support to multiple generations, everyday tasks can sometimes be very overwhelming and can seriously impact an individual's mental health. If the tools like Entitled-To Benefit Checker are available in multiple languages format, it'll make the tool more accessible and reduce pressure on Fife Council staff assisting the clients with their benefit checks.

Insights
The staff working in Fife Council office have been very helpful and supportive for the client in helping her with completing and submitting her applications for support from Fife Council.

However, in this situation, approaching the Fife Council staff when the client does not know if there's going to be any support at the end of the appointment can be daunting and sometimes embarrassing. Enhancing the accessibility of Fife Council website and making the information available in multiple formats such as simple English text, would also make accessing support more equal for service user.

Another similar concern raised by a teacher at Fife College was that a lot of their students are young adults, who have no previous experience of applying for council housing. When they receive communication from Fife Council updating them on their application, especially when advising if any documentation is missing, due to the formal text used in the communication, the information seems very daunting. If the text can be formatted to simple English, it'll be more useful and will make the information easier to process for them. It'll also make Fife Council more approachable for the local residents, especially the younger population.

Let's Chat Case Study – 5

Protected Characteristics: Disability

Client Experiences / Barrier:
Mr. H had difficulty contacting and liaising with Fife Council regarding a number of issues. He had lived in his current Fife Council property for around 4 years at this point, and had faced various issues with their neighbours, including physical and verbal abuse, racist attacks and general anti-social behaviour.

Mr. H was frustrated as the communications received by the Council were not accessible to them. They had requested letters, or emails in a specific font and formatting so that they can read them easily. They had also requested to be contacted ahead of time for any visits from social workers, housing staff or external contractors.

On top of these issues, the property they were living in was in a state of disrepair, with there being issues with the front door, bathroom and front pathway area.

Mr. H reached out to Fife Centre for Equalities as they had been contacted regarding attending a meeting with Fife Council and a range of partners, however, were unaware of what was to be discussed in the meeting, who would be attending or what was expected of them. They were told that the meeting would be going ahead whether they were there or not, this caused them immense stress and anxiety due to their disability.

Challenges encountered, when acquiring support:
There were several challenges encountered when acquiring support for the client:

- The client was reluctant to engage with services directly due to their misunderstanding of their communication needs.
- They felt isolated due to the lack of communication and consultation regarding meetings on their situation.
- Working in parallel as opposed to in partnership with other organisations could cause difficulties when staying abreast of developments.
- Maintaining contact with the client due to their circumstances.
- Mr. H's own circumstances meant that they had limited availability due to illness.

The key issue with Mr. H's case was the lack of uncertainty surrounding his support plan, he did not lack confidence when it came to engaging with public services, however, there was a major barrier when the resources and information he is being provided with is inaccessible. This often left him "in the dark" and reliant on friends or partner organisations to decipher what has been sent to him.

Outcome:
As there were multiple agencies supporting the one client, FCE thought best to engage

with the lead officer providing support to the individual.

Recommendations were given to assist in the planning and hosting of meetings, to ensure that the client felt comfortable and able to attend the meeting at full capacity to engage. These recommendations ranged from level of lighting in the room when meeting with Mr. H, to the font that was used when getting in touch via email.
As such, the meeting went ahead with the advice given, and a more positive outcome was generated for Mr. H. Now that all the agencies involved are aware of Mr. H's communication needs, they are able to communicate with him effectively and in a way that does not cause him high levels of stress of anxiety.

A long-term support plan has been put in place for him, and actions have been assigned to the agencies supporting him to work alongside each other to address his concerns.

Learning and Findings:
A key lesson learned is to not take anyone communication preferences for granted, even minor adjustments can make a massive difference when trying to better understand an individuals' current circumstances.

In Mr. H's case, by adhering to his communication requests, there is a better chance for positive engagement with him and it is more likely that his support plan is tailored specifically to his needs.

The long-term concern for Mr. H would be engaging with new agencies or departments within Fife Council, as they will need to be made aware of his communication needs.

Let's Chat: Equality Fife

Let's Chat Equality - Fife is our listening ear to everyone who lives, works or studies in Fife to share what is most important and of concern.

You can quickly share feedback through a simple form and FCE will carry out the feedback for you.I t is a good opportunity to use your lived experience to change and improve in services for the benefit of everyone in Fife.

We ask:

- What is working well, what is positive, or what is missing that you would like more of?
- What do you find difficult or what barriers do you and your community face?
- If there was one thing that would make a big improvement for everyone living in Fife, what would it be?
- Would you be interested in speaking to us more about your experiences? Please fill in your contact details below.

Interested in making Fife more equal for everyone?

Take part online: Let's Chat: Equality in Fife | FCE

Contact us via:

- Email: Info@centreforequalities.org.uk
- Phone: 01592 645310
- Text: 07800 005834

Meet us in person at any of our events,

Or, write to us at our address below:

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